



Formerly Unitarian Association of Lay Leaders

NEWSLETTER

.....
Spring 2009

"supporting lay ministry in all its forms"

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**Nightingale Centre, Great Hucklow
Venue for UALM Conference**

From the Editor's Desk

Hello everyone!

Welcome to your first UALM newsletter. I do hope you enjoy it and find it useful. Obviously, this is very much an initial draft. If you have any suggestions for improvement, please let me know - better still if you have ideas for what might be included, and can provide the content! ☺



I'm very impressed with our new website; do visit it, there's lots to read. Many thanks to Chris Granger for putting it together, and to Sue Woolley, our secretary, for most of the ideas. Thanks also go to James Barry for the photos, on the website and in this issue.

To introduce myself... I am a Mancunian by birth and, though my parents weren't Unitarian, for some reason (probably because it didn't involve crossing any main roads so they didn't have to come with me!) they sent me to a Unitarian Sunday School - Brookfield Church in Gorton. By the time I left in my late teens, I'd been a Sunday School teacher for several years - and was proud to call myself Unitarian.

Nearly forty years later, a chance remark led me to Bayshill Church in Cheltenham, where I was then living. That was less than three years ago - and now I take services across the Cotswold group (and occasionally beyond!), edit both Cotswold Group and Midland District newsletters, am part way through the Worship Studies course, and have just been accepted to train as a Lay Pastor. Don't ask me how I got here, I don't know!

When I wandered along to the then UALL meeting at GA last year, I certainly didn't expect to be on the Committee of UALM and editing its newsletter less than a year later... nor did I expect to be about to start training as a Lay Pastor. But some things are meant to be, and we just have to recognise that and 'go with the flow'.

I hope to meet some of you at the GA meetings in Chester, and more of you at Great Hucklow in November for our Conference.

Kath Riley

President's Piece

This is quite an auspicious occasion - a first 'real' Newsletter, and my own very first time to address you in my new capacity as your President; but we must not let it go to our heads!

Firstly I must say a-very big 'THANK YOU' to our indefatigable secretary, Sue Woolley, who has plunged headfirst into the job with great determination and devotion. I am amazed at the constant stream of updated address-lists to cope with our ever-increasing membership. I always knew that there were more people 'out there' than we seemed to be attracting, and the change of staff has obviously done good.

Secondly, I must give my most grateful thanks to the very hard-working Kath Riley who has undertaken to produce this Newsletter - she is a real dynamo, and I am eagerly looking forward to seeing the finished result of this, our very first attempt.

I am also looking forward to meeting as many of you again as possible at the forthcoming General Assembly Meetings at Chester, and getting to know those of you who are new to our circle. I feel that we provide a very valuable platform for those of us in positions of Lay Leadership and congregational guidance; if only to have an occasional grizzle at some of the foibles of those we minister to or to share those occasional real unexpected joys which are such a rewarding part of the job.

The coming years look very promising indeed, given all the talent we have at our disposal, and I, for one, am most excited at the prospect of future developments.

Malcolm Sadler, UALM President.



Malcolm Sadler

Sue's Slot

Welcome to our very first UALM newsletter! I think it's splendid that we have managed to achieve so much since our conference at the end of October – we've got a *rather* good website www.ualm.org.uk (though I say it as shouldn't!) and now we've got a newsletter.

Our esteemed editor, Kath, has asked me to write a few words about how I discovered UALM. It was in June 2006, when a GA-mailing dropped through the letterbox, which included a flyer for the October 2006 conference.

At the time, I was just starting to deliver services outside my home congregation of Northampton, and the weekend sounded like just what I needed – the chance to mix with other lay worship leaders, to make friends and to pick up useful tips.

And so it proved. I met some really nice people, bought some new worship resources, and went home tired but happy. Little did I realise that two years later, I was going to become Secretary of the new, all-singing, all-dancing Unitarian Association for Lay Ministry!

I believe that the support we give to each other is our main purpose. All of you should know that you can ask for help and advice from anyone else on the contacts list. There will never be enough ministers to go round (or enough congregations that can afford them), so our work as lay worship leaders (with or without pastoral oversight) is vital to the survival and growth of our beloved "uncommon denomination".

Long may we flourish!

Sue Woolley, UALM Secretary



Sue Woolley

Unitarian lay leaders 'surprise and inspire' A report on our conference at Hucklow last November

Innovative worship was the theme for a weekend conference of the Unitarian Association of Lay Leaders, held at Great Hucklow from 31st October to 2nd November, which drew 22 lay leaders from across England, Wales and Scotland.

It was a weekend to inspire, not least because several attenders themselves produced and led innovative worship at the start and end of each day - and because the formal presentations were of a very high standard.

But it was a weekend of surprises too: one (for me at any rate) was the stout defence offered by a number of participants for the so-called 'hymn-sandwich' format - which is often held up as the 'villain of the piece' in discussions on stale forms of worship. (A 'hymn-sandwich' typically consists of: hymn, followed by a reading, then another hymn, etc).

Its defenders made the following points: all services consist of some kind of 'sandwich'; hymns offer congregants a chance to participate in the service together; that people enjoy singing; and that singing gives folk a chance to stand up (after sitting for long prayers, readings or sermons) and stretch their legs, backs and lungs!

In fact one of the main speakers, the Rev Linda Hart (Richmond and Putney), pointed out that the term 'hymn-sandwich' is often used as a convenient shorthand for routine worship. The real sin, she said, was to be boring, and hymns were not necessarily the problem.

Linda said a clear concept of structure would make it easier to lead lively worship. She outlined the main elements of a service as: Entering (creating welcome); celebrating the community; centring; engaging; and affirming. She discussed the strands making up each of these elements - suggesting that, once structure is grasped, it becomes easier to shuffle 'the bits' around and create unpredictability.

But above all, she said, people who lead services must wrestle with things that matter deeply. *"If worship leaders do not reach into the depths of themselves, they will not be able to touch the depths in others."*

Earlier, Martin Gienke (Lay Person-in-Charge, Bury St Edmunds) had posed the question: what is worship? He began by quoting the answers given by a variety of Unitarian ministers.

His next question was - how is worship different from other spiritual activities? Effective worship, he suggested, contains wonder and awe (the 'wow' factor); it can be seen as a metaphor for approaching the divine, the 'mystery beyond'. All our forms of worship are metaphors for helping us understand the Unknown. But, he warned, we must beware of getting stuck in metaphors.

So how is Unitarian worship different? At best, our worship is unpredictable, varied and diffuse - it takes place in congregations free to choose their own patterns. But, Martin asked, is our worship too word-centred, do we lack symbols, do we contain enough emotion?



UALL / UALM Conference - November 2008

Sue Woolley (Lay Preacher in the Midland Union and District Facilitator there) rounded off the main presentations with a most useful account of worship materials available to worship leaders.

These included a host of publications, from books on Unitarianism and world religions to anthologies, prayers and handbooks. Sue also highlighted Internet sources, not least the web library of the American Unitarian Universalists.

The weekend included a session on training courses available to lay worship leaders - principally the General Assembly's Worship Studies Course (and Unitarian Studies Course), which several of those present were undertaking (or had already completed). Liz Shaw, the administrator of this course, Dawn Buckle of the Joined Up Education Panel and two course tutors, the Revs Ernest Baker and Alex Bradley, attended for this session - as did the Rev Dr Ann Peart, the Principal of Unitarian College Manchester.

A good social time was held, with a customary final evening of merriment in the Great Hucklow tradition.

Jim Corrigan

Need inspiration?

UALM members have given services recently on these subjects:

peace of mind
dreams
love makes the world go round
The joke's on us!
Lent

Check out the resources' page on the website for more ideas:-
<http://ualm.org.uk/resources.htm>

I can particularly recommend the UUA's Worship Web, and the list compiled by Angela Maher could keep you occupied for hours!

What you said ...

David Arthur, UALM Treasurer



David Arthur

I have been taking services since the mid 1960s when I was in my late 20s, and so I suppose I could say that I have been involved in some kind of lay ministry nearly all my adult life. And that is without counting all the other ways in which I have been of service to the denomination. But I have never received any formal training; perhaps, after 45 years or so, I ought to be taught how to do it! I now take about 8-10 services a year; in addition, I am the glue which holds together the Harrogate Unitarian Fellowship, so if I were status-conscious (which I am not), I could describe myself as its Lay Leader (which I do not - I am its chairman).

The most recent service I took was at Stockton on 8th March 2009, which happened to be the 150th anniversary of the birth of Kenneth Grahame, author of *The Wind in the Willows*. I read the passage in that book where the Water Rat extols the pleasure of "simply messing about in boats", and my address concentrated on the contrast between busy-busy activity (we had Tennyson's hymn which includes the lines "let us then be up and doing") and the absence of same (we had WH Davies's hymn/poem "What is this life if, full of care, we have no time to stand and stare"). It seemed to be well received.

Anniversaries are often good handles to hang a service on; whether it is a birth, death, or some other event. I have devised, and gradually added to, a spreadsheet which tells me for any given date whether there is any interesting circumstance I might be able to use. Sometimes there isn't; my next service is on 29th March, and my spreadsheet has only the death of the composer Charles Stanford on 1924 and the opening of the Royal Albert Hall in 1871; so I shall have to think of something else!

And a few words from two of our newest members ...

Lucy Harris

I found my way to a Unitarian congregation after research following a BBC South news item in 1998. The congregation was Trowbridge. That's an hour away and too far to commit to in the full terms of being a full participant in congregational activities. I was directed to the unofficial fellowship in Salisbury and was closely involved with that for a while. I still have congenial relations with them.

Somehow one or other of these groups asked me to lead a meeting on one occasion and sporadically ever since the invitation has again been extended. I lead Trowbridge in worship whenever asked - it has turned out to be about twice a year in recent years.

My closest connection with the Movement is through the National Unitarian Fellowship, where I can log on at any time to the online forum and connect through writing with people whose life patterns don't coincide with mine. It's the asynchronous nature of the e-medium that makes the NUF work for me, rather than having to be available at set times to meet face to face as a group.

I haven't the time or energy after long days at work to study for full Lay Leadership, but am very glad that UALM has now been born out of a previous incarnation. I look forward to joining in where I can.

Shammy Webster

I first heard about UALM from Dawn Buckle, who approached me back in 2007 regarding plans to restart a group for Lay Preachers due to the collapse of the previous group. After that I didn't hear anything for about a year until a Provincial Assembly meeting where Dawn announced the set up of UALM and looked in my direction, I call it the "Buckle look". (Ed: I know it well...!) Then at the Provincial Assembly AGM in February Sue Woolley was one of the speakers and she informed me that she intended to ensnare me during her visit.

All in all I put my membership down to bullying tactics! Only playing, I fully intended to join and I'm glad I have.

I've only been a member for a month so I haven't really used UALM to its potential yet. I'm expecting to be part of a networking team who share ideas and support each other.

My last service was one on Lent. I have to say that I found it as inspirational as a wet teabag. My excuse is "I can't be perfect all the time, some of the time is hard enough". I'm just trying to make myself feel better..

I guess I'm a sucker for a sob story and I love supporting the "underdog". I do one service a month at our Brookfield Church in Gorton, Manchester and one per month at Denton. Neither church has a minister and they both struggle to keep the doors open. Actually, I love Denton church and have become a member, so I attend as part of the congregation as well. I also have bookings for other churches as one offs for when they need a helping hand.

I'm currently half way through the course to become a Lay Preacher although it's been so long since I finished the Preliminary Step I can't even remember what the course is called. Though, with other commitments increasing it's looking less and less likely I will ever get round to doing the Advanced part of the course.

Editor's note: The **Worship Studies Course** is a modular course, provided under the auspices of the GA's Education and Training Commission and managed by the Joined Up Education Panel. Successful completion leads to recognition as a qualified Lay Preacher / Lay Worship Leader and addition to the Lay Preacher & Worship Leader Roll of the General Assembly.

There are three steps: Foundation, often provided at District level; Preliminary; and Advanced, both delivered by distance learning. Details available from the Course Administrator, Liz Shaw

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Anna Jarvis

This is part of an address that Anna gave as part of a service held on the Women's World Day of Prayer (6th March this year), at Brook Street Chapel in Knutsford. I found it inspirational; I hope you do too. She kindly gave me permission to print it here.

Moving beyond any tribal, political, or social groupings, we are all members of one body – that of humankind – we are all linked to each other by the common ground of humanity. And we are all dependent upon one another, albeit often in ways invisible to our weak vision.

And this highlights certain key lessons that I believe are crucial for us to learn if we are to move out of our small cliques, our tribal allegiances and political divisions, and into true membership of humankind.

Each woman, each man in this world is needed. Each woman, each man in this world has a value, a purpose, a gift, a talent. Each has a vital role to play as the world makes its history, and each must be seen, and treated, as a child of god. That's easy to say when thinking about those brave women of Papua New Guinea, of course (see note). Not so easy when you try to apply the same formula to the Osama Bin Ladens, Saddam Husseins and Robert Mugabes, the Myra Hindleys, Harold Shipmans and Fred Wests of the world. And yet if we are to be true to our word, that is just what we must do – see the child of god in each and every person, regardless of the pain and suffering they may have caused.

Each woman, each man in this world is needed. Each woman, each man in this world has needs. And those needs must be recognised, and acknowledged, and fulfilled. Last December saw the 60th Anniversary of the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights – six decades since that list of inalienable human rights was drawn up, and yet how many people, how many communities, how many ethnic groups are still being denied their rights simply because they are not yet seen as part of the one body of human kind.

Last week I led Sunday worship here at Brook Street Chapel and my theme was that of stereotypes, asking the question, 'When you look at a stranger what do you see?' Often what is seen is an alien being, not a brother or sister. And yet we are all members of one body, the body of humanity, children of the Universal Godhead no matter what creed, or lack of creed, we might operate under.

And that statement, "we are all members of one body", has one other, essential, interpretation. Very often, we are very good at claiming rights for, and allocating worth to, other people. We will sign petitions, go on rallies, boycott shops and banks, in order to uphold the rights of others. We must not forget to accord ourselves the same respect. We too have value, with our own unique gifts and talents, even if it takes a long time to work out what they are. We too have vital roles to play, both as individuals and as members of all those different bodies, local, national, and international, through which we channel our love and determination. We also have our needs to be recognised as us, unique, worthy of love and respect, and as deserving of our human rights as every other person.

For we are all children of God, whatever name we use to describe God, and whatever name we give ourselves. Today, in this service, we have prayed that the Spirit of unity, peace and love in the lives of all people of different races, colours, languages, cultures and traditions be strengthened. Let us pray also that that Spirit may be alive and shining within each of us, that together the light that we can offer, each in our own ways, will form part of one great light that illuminates all corners of the globe, bringing enlightenment and wisdom, healing and nurturing, love and peace and fellowship.

Note: The 'brave women of Papua New Guinea' prevented bloodshed between their two tribes.

Find out more about the Women's World Day of Prayer here:

<http://www.wwdp-natcomm.org/index.asp>

Members' News

UALM Members accepted for training

Five of our members have been interviewed by the Ministry Panel and accepted for training this year. They are:

Rob McPherson and Sue Woolley (as Ministers)
Jim Corrigan, Nicky Jenkins and Kath Riley (as Lay Pastors)

Sue and Jim will be attending Harris Manchester College, Oxford; Rob, Nicky and Kath will be going to Unitarian College in Manchester.

(Ed: It's quite odd writing a piece that mentions oneself ...)

Myrna Michell is crossing the border!

Myrna Michell is making the perilous crossing from Lancashire into Yorkshire soon.. In June, she will be moving from Rawtenstall in the Rossendale Valley, to succeed Rev. Margaret Kirk at St. Saviourgate Chapel in York.

Myrna says:

'Rawtenstall was my home congregation when I moved nearby in January 2005. Soon I began to take a monthly service, my training at UCM beginning that autumn. Lawrence and June Forshaw asked me to become student pastor there for my second year of study, with a view to becoming lay pastor (quarter-time) for a period, once qualified.

By the time I leave Rawtenstall at the end of June, I will have been lay pastor for two years but had 'grown into it' in the previous two and half years. Without that period of study and experience, I would not be ready to consider a half-time appointment at York - a congregation and environment which has lots to offer and to challenge me, both in ministry and for my musical side.'



Our congratulations go to all the afore-mentioned ☺

Dates for your diary

GA Annual meetings 2009

Your committee will be giving a presentation on UALM at GA this year - on Wednesday 15th April from 5:10 p.m. to 5:50 p.m. the Committee will tell you what we have been doing on your behalf, and you can ask us questions, or tell us what we should have been doing instead!

There will be also a UALM information point - come and meet your Committee members, pick up leaflets, and tell us about your ideas.

UALM Conference 2009

When: Friday 13th - Sunday 15th November 2009
Where: The Nightingale Centre, Great Hucklow
Theme: Pastoral Care

More details in the autumn issue of this newsletter.

Important date!

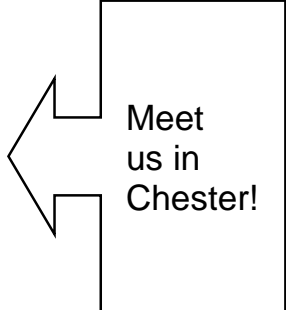
31st August, 2009 - Final date for sending in contributions for the next issue of the UALM Newsletter.

Send them

to Kath Riley at ualm.newsletter@googlemail.com **or**
to Sue Woolley (contact details on page 15)

Thanks to those who sent in contributions this time. But you may have noticed that quite a lot of this newsletter was written by members of the Committee - we don't want it stay that way! This is *your* newsletter, and we would love you to tell us of your doings, offer suggestions for services, and pass tips to each other. You may not think that what you have to say is interesting; be assured, it is. ☺

Though the printed version is in black and white to keep costs down, the colour version of this newsletter will be downloadable from the website In due course.



Meet
us in
Chester!

UALM Committee

Officers

President: Mr. Malcolm Sadler
Secretary: Mrs. Sue Woolley
Treasurer: Mr. David Arthur

Committee Members:

Rev. David Monk
Ms. Kath Riley (Newsletter editor)
Mrs. Chrissie Wilkie

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Last Word ...



A boy was watching his mother write a sermon.
"How do you know what to say?" he asked.
"Why, God tells me."
"Oh ... then why do you keep crossing things out?"

Our Object

The Unitarian Association for Lay Ministry exists to support lay ministry in all its forms. UALM's objectives are as follows:

1. to support all those involved in delivering worship in Unitarian churches and chapels
2. to support all those involved in lay leadership of a Unitarian congregation, whatever form this might take
3. to promote and share best practice in Unitarian worship and lay ministry
4. to support the General Assembly of Unitarian & Free Christian Churches

Do YOU take services for a Unitarian congregation? Are YOU involved in Unitarian lay leadership? Yes? Then join us.

How to join UALM

I am delighted to report that our membership has risen from 21 last October, to 35 as I write this entry. A very warm welcome to all those who have joined UALM in the past few months.

If you aren't already a member of UALM, and are involved in lay Ministry - in any form - please join us. Membership is open to all those involved in lay ministry in Unitarian congregations.

The subscription rate for 2008/9 is £10.

Download an application form from <http://ualm.org.uk/join.htm>, complete it, and send it with your cheque for £10 (made payable to 'UALM'), to:

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UALM website - www.ualm.org.uk